

Eight new coins should make '86 a vintage year

By Roger Boye

The new year promises great excitement for coin buffs, thanks in large part to Uncle Sam.

Federal officials probably will release eight new coins in 1986, the biggest such output in a 12-month period since the administration of President Woodrow Wilson. All the new issues are specialty pieces geared for sale to collectors and investors rather than for use as circulating money.

Three of the eight items—the Statue of Liberty commemorative coins—will be shipped to buyers beginning in January. Earlier this month, Treasury workers were processing nearly 250,000 orders that had arrived since sales began in November.

By law, production of the 1986-dated statue coins [a \$5 gold piece, silver dollar and copper-nickel half dollar] can continue until Dec. 31, 1986, but most of the market hype probably will occur before the statue's torch is relit next July 3. Money from the coinage program will help pay for repairs to the statue and related projects.

Officials are offering the coins in 12 sales options, with prices ranging from \$6 for an uncirculated half-dollar to \$439.50 for a set of six coins. For more information write to the United States Mint, 633 3d St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20220.

After sales have peaked, officials will begin to issue five other new items: a one-ounce [\$1 face value] silver dollar and four gold coins containing from one ounce to 1/10th of an ounce of gold [face values of \$50, \$25, \$10 and \$5]. Although pricing and marketing plans have yet to be announced, distribution of the coins won't begin until October, at the earliest.

Those five pieces—the first "bullion coins" in U.S. history—will be minted strictly for sale to investors who want to own precious metals; as such, the U.S. gold will compete with the South African Krugerrand and Canadian Maple Leaf on international markets. Conceivably, the U.S. Treasury will strike the five coins for many years because the law provides for no cutoff date.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Congress may debate legislation next year that calls for production of several other types of coins, as well as medals. Most likely to pass, experts say, is a bill authorizing a silver dollar and \$5 gold piece to commemorate the 1987 bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution.